

# franciscan

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## Church and State

by David L. Edwards



It is an honour, but a perplexing one, to be asked to discuss 'Church and State' here. The honour is mine because, although eminent in neither Church nor State, I have been invited and therefore am able to do a little bit for the SSF, which I have admired ever since it

helped me as a rather bewildered schoolboy in the 1940s. The perplexity is also mine, because it is a subject both complex (and don't I know it as a church historian!) and controversial (and don't I know it as a former Speaker's Chaplain in the House of Commons!) — and because it seems remote from the specifically Franciscan concerns.

It is also, of course, remote from the New Testament. There political authorities may be viewed sceptically (as in Jesus' references to the Herods) or submitted to (he was crucified under Pontius Pilate). The Roman empire may be regarded as part of God's providential plan (as in Romans 13) or as a

doomed beast (as in Revelation 13). But before Constantine and Theodosius in the fourth century there did not seem much point in discussing how an institutional Church, replete with well known clergy, famous buildings, large endowments, active specialists in 'social responsibility', a network of schools and

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## CHURCH AND STATE

It may be even Franciscan to say that if you love the poor you ought to be interested in politics'. So says David Edwards in our lead article under this title. The truth of this is forced upon our consciences not only by the vast changes in Great Britain during ten years with Mrs Thatcher at the helm, but also by the tremendous upheavals in Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia. John Atherton links the two together and poses the questions which now face the Churches. Brother Tristram SSF points to the moral lessons which may be learnt from recent events.

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millions of adherents, should be formally related to the State. And it was one thing for the Church to relate to a monarchy when the chance came, for example through a coronation: it is another to relate to the public life of a society which prides itself on democracy and pluralism. Again, it is one thing to convert a king or a local chief (which was the decisive step in the expansion of Christianity in many times and places): it is another to bear witness to a society which holds 'freedom of conscience' sacred and which is in one sense or another a secular or otherwise non-Christian state. So neither Scripture nor ancient Tradition supplies detailed guidance for Church and State in the 1990s.

Should we conclude that in modern circumstances no attempt should be made to establish any formal link between the organs of the State and any particular religious body? That is the solution adopted not only in Communist countries but also in India, a country where the very air seems full of religion, and the USA, a country which goes to church far more enthusiastically than most Europeans do. This obviously does seem the sensible policy where the divisions within a nation go deep and can have religious labels fixed to them. (Any solution in Northern Ireland or Lebanon would have to transcend 'religious' conflicts, and India shows how a 'secular' state can hold together although such conflicts are always erupting.) The Christian Church or a branch of it seems to have a plain duty to renounce all privilege when the result of giving it privileges would be to embitter rivals, for the supreme consideration is the welfare of the people as God's children.

Should we conclude that, whether or not Church and State are completely separated, there should be a very clear distinction between churchmen and statesmen? That is the solution adopted in many places where the Church proclaims a profoundly spiritual message through martyrdom (as often in the Eastern Orthodox tradition) or has made a 'preferential option' for the poor in the face of injustice (as in Latin America in the era of liberation theology). The Church benefits by not having to flatter the men in power (the most notorious recent example of such flattery being the misconduct of church leaders in relation to the tyranny in Romania). The State also benefits if the spokesmen of the Churches do not claim that religion endorses one answer or another to a political or economic problem which is best solved by discussion — as calm and objective as possible — without bringing God too rapidly into the equations. One of the long-term strengths of Christianity is



*Propping up the Church or propping up the State? Pope Innocent III dreams of Francis supporting the Lateran (fresco by B. Gozzoli).*

that, unlike Islam, it does not claim to offer a blueprint for political and economic legislation. Church and State alike appear to have a duty to hesitate long before mixing religion and party politics — a mixture which in history has often proved disastrous both for the life of the spirit and for the life of society.

In particular it is dangerous for the authorities of the State to have the decisive say in the appointment of church leaders. This has been brought home to me by the talk about who might become the next Archbishop of Canterbury. On 20 January the *Economist* observed: 'In the past Mrs Thatcher has meddled little in episcopal appointments. Only a saint would resist the temptation this time'. It could not vouch for the Prime Minister's sanctity. For a British politician to decide who should be the senior bishop in the Anglican Communion seems as wrong as for the Turkish government to be able to veto an election as Patriarch of Constantinople (another current prac-

tice).

It is also dangerous for the legislature of the State to be able to prevent the Church from ordering its own worship and discipline according to its own conscience. In England the present arrangements between Parliament and the General Synod are better than they used to be, but from time to time incidents occur which are reminders that the system is more pragmatic than logical and more favourable to Parliament than to the Church's own elected assembly. Since most MPs are reluctant to vote on church matters, a few can conduct their own crusades against the Synod — protecting the 1662 Prayer Book, forbidding bishops to ordain any persons involved in a divorce, perhaps in the future trying to ban women priests. If the Church of England has to endure such infringements of its own liberty (infringements which the Church of Scotland stopped many years ago) on the ground that only so will the State include bishops in the House of Lords, that price seems too high.



The conclusion which I have reached is, however, **not** that all links between Church and State are wrong. The modern democratic State has immense responsibilities for the welfare of the people. Now that I come to think of it, it may even be Franciscan to say that if you love the poor you ought to be interested in politics. There is great value in the provision of opportunities for the representatives of Church and State to meet each other, within and outside a context of worship. It is very useful to society when church leaders offer ethical comments on politics (and I should be prepared to defend the Church of England's twentieth-century record in that field). It is also useful when leading politicians give as good as they get (as Mrs Thatcher has done). The Church of England seems to have got things more or less right: it is the National Church, it has a vocal Church and Nation Committee, politicians cannot control it. In other situations (as in South Africa) it is essential to be ecumenical, but how much better it would have been had the Church of the majority in power, the Dutch Reformed Church, been able to influence politics by a truly Christian commentary!

Where this is possible without compromising the integrity of the Church or the State, it is right to make clear that the Church is something larger than a religious ghetto. For the Church is planted in the world as a sign pointing to the Government of God.

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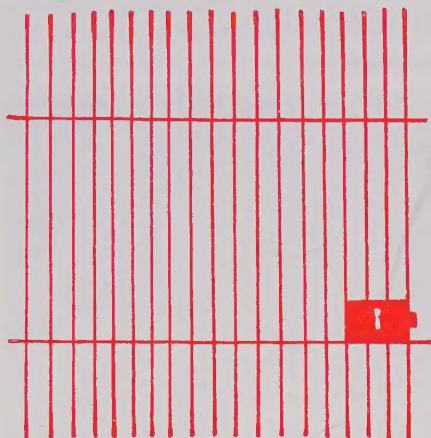
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# 'Morning Vicar'



by Brother Marcus SSF  
Chaplain Walton Prison, Liverpool

The start of another day. The familiar sound of slopping out. The queue at the recess. And amidst the hustle and bustle that takes place after the prisoners have eaten a spartan breakfast the chaplain's day starts. The Gospel is preached and lived out between or behind these walls.

'But what do you do?' 'Do you talk to them about Jesus?' Well yes, but I see my role as one who serves and sometimes that means just to listen. Before a chaplain does anything he has to be present, accessible and available; he has to be realistic yet imaginative about everything that is happening around him.

The chaplain represents the work of the church and the Lord Jesus Christ in a particular situation and among a certain group of people in society. The Prison Act has always placed chaplains firmly within the prison situation. Recognising this the Prison Department also requires certain tasks to be done within the institution. These are called 'Statutory Duties' and are set out in Prison Rules and Standing Orders.

I am sure that any chaplain would choose to do these things as they involve meeting people as they come into prison (Receptions), and as they leave prison (Discharges), and almost everything in between, including visiting the cells, the hospital, and the punishment area.

In the hospital some are in strip cells for their own protection as they have threatened or attempted to commit suicide.

The segregated area is visited every day: these are people who are placed on what is called 'Rule 43' for their own protection.

In essence chaplains stand at the crossroads of human experience and need to make sense of the waiting and the pain and the guilt that belong to imprisonment. It is obvious therefore that in being present chaplains have a set of references beyond statutory and departmental rules, although not in direct conflict. This other set of references for determining activities comes from God who calls men and women to this particular work within the Church.

The crossroads of human experience in a prison includes the human experience of God, the Christian experience of God in Christ, the experience of joy and hope on the one side and on the other, of sin judged and forgiven through the Holy Spirit.

As we go about our work we seek to make known the Christian message and to sow seeds in lives where the soil has become dry for lack of moisture or too many harsh winds.

The purpose is not to moralise and wound and impose, but to encourage a process of growth and self-discovery. Men and women in prison can discover that a desolating experience is not a dead end but a challenge and a crossroads with some real choices. In Walton as in many prisons it is the chaplains who bring together the largest number of inmates, in worship in the Chapel.

## A step nearer to God

For whatever the reasons that take prisoners to Chapel, and there are many, it is an opportunity to bring someone a step nearer to God, including the officers.

The sacraments, the scriptures and prayer are at the heart of any chaplain's work and for that reason the Chapel is used by chaplains as a place for our own prayers. All the chaplains of different denominations meet together for prayer so that we can be strengthened in the Lord's service, and more able to offer ourselves as a team.

We are there to be used and we are available simply to care about people as individuals who are more than just numbers or problems or cases. Many people in prison have histories which make it very hard for them to accept help from anyone, chaplain or not.

Helping people has no strings attached, but unless the experience of imprisonment and whatever that may mean for each individual can become part of a journey toward a goal rather than a desert of purposeless waiting, the help is limited. Endless patience is required to stay present with people who cannot yet choose a road. In the end it can never be chosen for them.



# God's instrument in the 1990s

Transcending market economics  
and liberal democracies

by Canon John Atherton



*The grandeur of finance? Richard Rogers' vision in the new Lloyds of London building.*



**What is God asking of us in the 1990s? Answering that question may well turn out to be linked to two realities dominating the political scene at the beginning of this decade. On the one hand, we are entering the 90s through momentous changes in Europe, stretching from**

**Brussels in the West to Moscow in the East, and from Lithuania in the North to Armenia in the South. On the other hand, we begin the 90s in the UK after a decade of uninterrupted leadership by one person, Mrs Thatcher. This unique record in our modern history should be of interest to Christians in general and Franciscans in particular. For she began her rule in 1979 by describing her task in the words attributed to S. Francis, 'Lord make me an instrument of thy peace, where there is hatred, give love...' Her 'sermon on the mount' to the Church of Scotland in 1988, only confirmed her continuing commitment to her Christian vocation in politics.**

How are these two realities connected in other than God's purposes? A true story from the recent upheavals in Europe vividly illustrates the link. An influential British economist with free market sympathies was invited to a meeting in the old communist party

headquarters of an East European state shortly after the overthrow of the old regime. Discussing ways forward for that society's ailing economy, imagine his amazement to be told by the leading communist that what they needed was a Mrs Thatcher!

Yet should he have been so surprised? For the reform movements in East Europe have concentrated particularly on the need for more market-oriented economics and for liberal democracies. And these have been two of the dominant features of Mrs Thatcher's ten years in office, and of trends in West Europe, the USA, and Australasia. Indeed, because these two related ways of ordering society are so influential and widespread, transcending different cultures, histories, religions and ideologies, there is every likelihood that they will continue to dominate the 1990s.

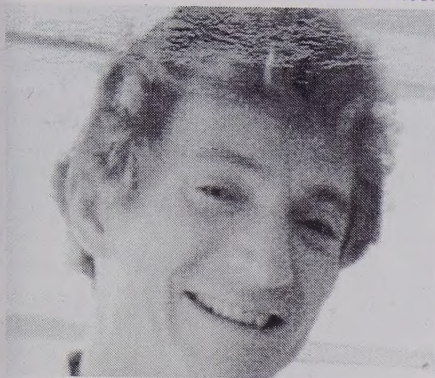
Trends such as these, particularly when presented with the clarity and conviction of Mrs Thatcher, have even set the agenda for the Labour Party. Its Policy Review presents what is essentially a market socialism of a liberal democratic kind. When this contemporary significance of market and democracy is combined with the fact that since the 1930s, key western theologians have seen market economics and political democracy as the least harmful ways of organising society discovered to date, then it is not fanciful to regard them as limited and finite instruments of God's providential purposes for human living at this time. They can be seen as the convergence of perspectives for organising society which reflect in however partial ways Christian hopes for living in complex economies.

Yet despite their importance, they still represent only the partial understandings and achievements of Christian purposes for society. As the least harmful ways of operating modern societies they illustrate the necessary Christian commitment to the politics of imperfection which require Christians to accept qualified successes as invitations to seek further change for the better. For when old orders have been overthrown in East Europe, and the task of building market economies and liberal democracies has begun, then the issues will have to be addressed which have faced us as a result of a decade of Thatcherism.

For example, accepting the great value of market economics as the preferred way for managing advanced economies, presents a major challenge to the Churches in general and Franciscans in particular. It means coming to terms with individualism, self-interest, competition, profit, and inequality. All these are values which challenge recent Christian over-commitments to persons in community, altruism, sharing, interdependence and equality.

Yet, if we are prepared to take seriously market economies and liberal democracies in the spirit of a new theological realism, as I believe we are





# Reaching out

*Brother Amos reports on the conference on mission attended by brothers and sisters involved in parish missions.*

Like a great grey ship thrown onto the rocks by a storm, the church of S. Andrew seems to rest among the streets, abandoned by the sea of secularism foaming around it. Inside however a conversion has taken place creating the Church Centre, our warm and comfortable home for five days, and source of hope for many in the neighbourhood. The converted church building was a lesson to us on mission from Revd. Patrick Sookhdeo before we even began our conference. Only 1/4% of the locals are worshipping Anglicans, and yet his church is growing.

I soon found that a central concept for the week was that of 'church'. Do we want to operate within the present Anglican parish system on missions? Or should we be promoting new ways of being church, believing that parishes have increasingly had their day? There is no longer an homogeneous Christian character to our society, but can the parish church, formed at a time when there was one, evolve to remain relevant in a secular and pluralistic neighbourhood? Well, look at S. Andrew's.

Overall we had four carefully planned and full days, with plenty of variety. There was time to pray together and to relax as well as some hard work. A very worthwhile half of our time was spent discussing and learning about the ways of mission that SSF knows so well. We spent an illuminating day hearing from Donald, Samuel and Hilary, in some detail, about appraising a parish (Brother David tells me that Algy had one criterion. The vicar. Was he converted?), planning a mission, and how to choose the best means of communicating the Gospel. Elizabeth Stirling talked about home team/visiting team interaction and we also had a session on the group dynamics of house groups.

Since we also wanted to explore new ways of doing mission, we had some outside speakers. First there was Sister Theresa Harfitt and Father Adrian Smith talking about 'Movement for a Better World'. It is based on the theory that churches can move through stages of growth on the road to 'maturity' just as individuals progress through childhood and adolescence. MBW believes that its careful programme of retreats, seminars and meetings can stimulate a church to grow into a new understanding of what being church is. It means growing away from church being a building where you worship on Sundays

and the vicar does everything, towards church being a communion of small communities in a neighbourhood. MBW expects changes in attitudes to take up to twenty years, and they keep visiting churches for all that time. This idea of mission nicely balances the idea of 'bringing someone to a personal relationship with Christ', by emphasizing the corporate aspect of salvation.

On Friday we had a talk by Brian Davies of Cafod on 'Base Ecclesial Communities' which are such a strong church movement in South America. They haven't yet taken off in Britain despite a series of conferences to promote the movement which have been attended by some dozen of our brothers and sisters. Is it that BECs spring from the experience of being oppressed and exploited and those on the conferences didn't feel they were?

BECs and the MBW offered quite new ways into mission, and different alternatives to being church from the parish system. We had also tried to learn from the house church movement and their emphasis on participation, calling out gifts, commitment, urgency and evangelism. The Church Army speakers also explained new ways. On their 'Oasis' missions, they ask for two members of a parish to give one whole year to the mission. Then two officers form a team with them and spend a whole (whole) year in the parish. Another new approach is the 'Open Door' retreat. Sister Angela Helen had helped conduct one, where people live at home, while making time to do some Ignatian meditation exercise, and see a conductor daily. Nor is it true, she told us, that it appeals only to a narrow cross section of church goers.

Amongst this variety there should be something for everyone. Perhaps our long term missions can be seen as based on the life and work of our houses. Our shorter missions to schools, parishes and prisons do best when strengthening and challenging those on the spot to continue the mission themselves. This is because lives are changed mostly by one to one contact, and structures and attitudes of church life strengthened when change takes place slowly.

Meanwhile, as one speaker hammered home, numbers in the C of E are falling. Will there be more wrecks in the storm? Unless individuals are converted to Christ, unless churches are communities of his kingdom, arks, full of his love and justice . . .

called to do, then there still remain testing and categorical questions of historic and contemporary importance. These both stand in judgement on markets and democracy and require their priority attention in the spirit of theological reform. The questions include: how to incorporate properly in society the marginalised millions in the UK, and the countless millions in the third world; how to encourage a generosity of spirit in individuals and groups in relation to market values like self-interest; how to face up to the increasing international reality of life whilst fostering more local loyalties; how to preserve and enhance God's created order whilst maintaining and extending prosperity; and how to expand each individual's power and capacity to pursue self-chosen purposes and stakes in the governing of increasingly complex societies.

All these questions represent major challenges to market economics and liberal democracies, whether in the UK, Western or East Europe. In exactly the same way, the Churches are being also challenged to work through market economics and liberal democracies. The question for the 90s is whether both challenges can be held together. On the success of that enterprise, and whatever shape of society it generates, may depend the prosperity, peace and justice of societies in the next century.

*John Atherton is Canon Theologian of Manchester Cathedral and is chairman of the Manchester Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility, and vice-chairman of the Church of England's Industrial and Economic Affairs Committee. He is author of Faith in the Nation: Christian Social Vision for Britain.*

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# Knot only, but also . . .

by John Nicholas novice SSF

I started my journey with SSF many many years back, but officially joined the community on 3 February, 1988.

I've now lived in three houses. Here at Glasshampton I have a room with a view. In Dorset I looked out of a narrow window onto a lime tree. In Liverpool I looked out of an even narrower window onto a house across the street painted in an alarming blend of grey and orange. In Dorset the early morning hours were punctuated by the sound of mooing cows. In Liverpool by the bleeping of the automatic car wash — but here — ah! The Birdsong. In Dorset I felt like a stationary object in a tide of people. In Liverpool everything was in constant ebb and flow including me — here it's somewhat more sedentary.

So what have I learned since joining the Society? Well for one thing the Lord's sense of humour knows no bounds, seemingly having an infinite variety of scriptwriters. And for another I'm just as barmy as everybody else — a comforting thought having spent most of my life in a world where everyone pretends that they are the normal balanced ones; it's all the other people who are odd.

I've been well lectured, seminared, tutorialled and grouped. Most of which I've already forgotten. The 'formal' part of the novitiate leaves little mark. Moments and events of the 'informal' are quite unforgettable. Some of it has been gory and ghastly, some of it's been beautiful and gratifying. Most has been really quite ordinary — reassuring as ordinariness has a way of putting agony and ecstasy in their rightful place.

Have I grown closer to God? I don't know — You'd have to ask her. Do I feel I've grown into and closer to community? Yes definitely. Is that a good thing? Maybe that's the sort of thing a time of novitiate is supposed to sort out. Am I pleased I joined? I'm delighted — Wouldn't I like to be doing something else with my life? You bet! Why do I go on with it? Because right now for me I couldn't think of any better way to live.

That's for the past and present. For the future — well what do they say? Don't count your chickens before they're hatched; they might have salmonella. And a commitment to life under vows? Well for the moment — let's say one on the rope is worth three in the . . .



*A wedding in the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile which refuses to recognize the Soviet State.*

## Resisting tyranny

by Tristram SSF



**The shades of Louis XIV and Charles I seemed to pervade the courthouse in Romania as Ceausescu shrieked at his 'trial' that no one present had the right to judge *him*, the head of state, the father of the nation.**

**It was as if the fundamental proof that there is Original Sin stood revealed, if only through the maxim that absolute power corrupts absolutely.**

Ceausescu, of course, would not have recognised this somewhat superficial theological depiction of the man and his imminent demise. But what was it that allowed this atheistic demagogue to become the leader of an ancient and overtly Christian peoples? How could a whole generation of Romanians have got themselves under the sway of this archetypal 1984 Big Brother, whose own professed faith was an anathema to their own? It might be more appropriate to begin by asking how Christianity has managed to survive at all, *per se*, not just in Romania but in Eastern Europe as a whole. Of course, there is not one answer, but the presence of that peculiar blend of martyred resistance with a truly Romantic *che sera sera* acquiescence, as easily identifiable in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy as in any communist country, might be a clue to it.

For those of us who live in a land where Christianity is taken as read, where a prime minister can use a biblical parable to prove the veracity of

personal wealth as a profound Christian ethic, the view of our own faith might become understandably blurred. But the faith itself is not obscured: William Temple's assertion that Christianity takes seriously the corruptibility of human nature remains valid and vital as a tenet of that faith. What is seen when the church attempts to accommodate the State is the human face of the church. As the corporeal representative of Christianity, the church is perhaps rarely seen at its best. And when church order reflects that of the state hierarchy, its attitude to social order is likely to be equally flawed.

Yet despite all of this, whether under an atheistically dominated regime or a patronising meritocracy, the church seems to survive as a focus of human understanding of what is seen to be essential. So-called Christian morality still bears more than a vague resemblance to Christ, whose word continues to bring us back to what is, as far as life and death are concerned, of the



# Bishop John Eastaugh

**Protector of the European Province,  
SSF, 1975-90**

**Protector General, SSF, 1989-90**

*Brother Anselm writes:*

On 1 April, 1989 our Protector John, Bishop of Hereford, received the profession in life vows of Brother Timothy at Alnmouth, and thus performed what was to be his last official act among us. To these more formal duties he always brought a splendid and dignified episcopal presence, something which his predecessor in office had led us to expect.

We were less well prepared for the warmth, generosity and mirth which were at once observable in our new bishop when he took office fifteen years ago, and certainly unaccustomed to a protector who spent time with us. It was clear that he took us seriously, and pastorally — that he brought to us the care and the skills which were already evident in his Poplar days, and that he



was determined to learn us and to know us in no superficial manner. This resolve led him every other year, bearing gifts, to the friary at Dar es Salaam in Tanzania until it closed in 1985.

Equipped with this thorough knowledge, he was able to 'protect' the community and its interests when it came under attack in various ways in the church, as well as in the hurly-burly of the popular press. He was also in a position to provide successive Ministers Provincial with informed counsel and support, (and was not prepared to do so merely at the end of a telephone). I was privileged annually to spend two nights with him and his family in Hereford, where the welcome included breakfast in bed, and a share of whatever was going on, as well as hours of time of someone for whom it was precious.

What more is there to say, when words as usual are so inadequate? We thank God for him, and for all he gave us, and offer to Bridget his widow, and the family, who shared John and their home with a succession of guests in brown so readily and delightfully, deep sympathy and sincere gratitude. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

essence. The church may clearly be lagging behind in so many fields, such as recognising all of humanity as equal before God, but it is still perceived as having something to give, something to share. And the most dramatic image of this is its witness, literally its martyrdom. Throughout Eastern Europe those ministers, whether Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant or even Unitarian, who were prepared to stand up and be counted, or rather shot at, may have been few but their influence extended far beyond their own immediate culture and circumstance. They were, for many, an ikon of the sacrificial nature of the Lord of love who was prepared to lay down his life not just for his friends or even his enemies, but for that in which he believed.

Such men and women were a permanent indictment of those ecclesiastics who had felt it best to collaborate with the powers-that-be, however honourable they themselves felt their motives to be. So to portray the church purely as a martyr church is to act rather like those who only allow their 'good side' to be photographed: the obverse visage should depict those Orthodox bishops who instructed that Ceausescu should be prayed for each Sunday as 'the beloved father of our land' and 'the saviour of the nation'; who actively co-operated in the persecution and suppression of their rival Christians the Uniate and Greek

Catholic Churches, referring to them as traitors; who concurred with the demolition not just of the medieval cathedrals in their care but of whole villages that stood in the way of the President's great highway. They cannot use the defence argument of Hitler's SS, whose claimed vindication was that they were only carrying out orders. However, pointing the accusing finger at them from the safe comfort of 'the West' will probably provide little by way of explanation.

So how should Christians in the West (I nearly, wrongly, said Christendom) view the historical political phenomenon which is loosely termed Eastern Europe? It seems arrogant even to suggest that there can be a definitive Christian view on the matter, and I would not do so. But there seem to be so many questions left hanging in the air if the situation is not tackled.

It is doubtful whether it could honestly be said that the seemingly inevitable collapse of Euro-communism can be attributed to the persistence of Christianity. Nevertheless, merely the refusal of the latter to go away might have contributed to the perception of the fallibility of that particular political dogma. But that also then begs the question as to whether Christianity even ought to be as antagonistic towards Marxism as it so often is. Simply because the practitioners of communism have nearly always been

profoundly anti-religious, is that an adequate reason for Christians to show such antipathy? I think not. Still, the very denial within dialectical materialism of a spiritual dimension to the class conflict, combined with the refusal of Marxists to see all the parties involved as potential sinners, rather disinclines the Christian from so narrow a view of humanity.

It might have been felt that the cult of personality had run its course with Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, but it would be simplistic to ignore the fact of the charismatic figures of history and the strength and power that emanated purely from their charisma. Whether it be Ceausescu or Reagan, Gorbachev or Thatcher, it will take a tremendous wrench to depose that particular form of idolatry.

The more positive conclusion that might be drawn is that the concept of communality that is intrinsic to the theory of socialism, and which has been taught (if not very well practised) for several generations now in Eastern Europe, unquestionably breathes through the gospels and the early Christian writings. If such teaching has managed to permeate the lives of the listeners, and can cast off the taint of contamination with the seedier side of the doctrine, and if it can be re-interpreted into the new understanding of political life, then maybe there is yet hope.



# Brother Denis SSF

*Brother Michael writes:*

A mutual friend persuaded Denis to invite me for supper. She said he could be of help to me in making up my mind about the future. It was the first time I had met a monk. It was a winter evening in Cambridge, in the middle of the war, and he had a bad cold — but I was instantly captivated. He was only thirty-three, but I was ten years younger, so he seemed quite old.

He had already made a distinctive mark by his preaching and speaking, his accessibility and wise counselling, his compassion and friendship, and his sense of uninhibited humour and natural gaiety: a trickle of students to the house was becoming a stream.

We became friends and not long after that I had tea with him and his mother in the Army and Navy stores. While he was absent from the table she warned me against him: 'He'll charm you and make you into a brother in the way Algy charmed him'. And she was right.

Denis had a wide range of human gifts, which he gave back, at some cost, to God. Not just his charm — though at that time he had it in abundance — but remarkable histrionic gifts that gave his preaching power, as well as an understanding of human nature that sprang out of his own, sometimes painful, vulnerability, dedicated to God in his service of man — as many have testified since his death.

He had a marvellous sense of language and a wide knowledge of literature. Several of the writers who were relating their wider and speculative insights concerning religious truth to their novels, plays and poems were known to him or became his friends,

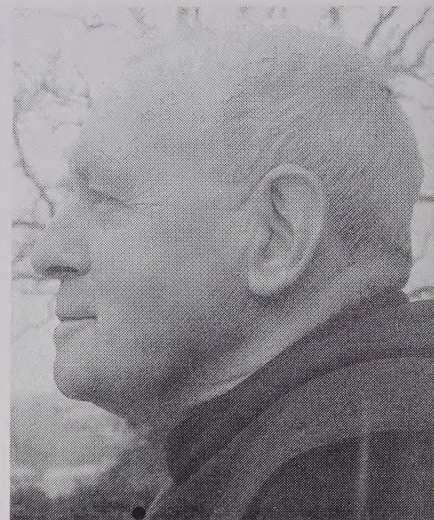
and he would return from London with amusing anecdotes about Rose Macaulay or Dorothy Sayers, or encounters with Christopher Fry. In time many of them came to talk at meetings in S. Francis House. He was particularly influenced by Charles Williams and often quoted him.

Soom after leaving Cambridge for a long stint at the Friary in Dorset (where he eventually became Guardian), he did a preaching tour in America and established our first links with the Episcopalian Order of S. Francis, with whom we later merged. He was a great success as a mission preacher and made many friends, among them the humorist James Thurber. Perhaps something about Thurber's sense of impending disaster and narrowly averted calamity found an echo in the life of Denis.

In the end his Dams Didn't Break, or the bed fall on father, and though the dog did bite people — well, Denis was capable himself of the occasional nip, though as it says of 'Mugs' in the story, 'He was always sorry after'.

Denis was Acting Minister for a short while after the death of Brother Douglas and then lived some time with the sisters at Walkerburn in Scotland where he wrote his biography of Father Algy. He had joined Algy at St. Ives in Huntingdon before the war, becoming his curate and a member of the Indian brotherhood, the Christa Prema Seva Sangha, of which Algy was also a member. He intended at that time to follow Algy's example and go to India, but in fact he followed him to Dorset where they joined up with Douglas to create the Society of S. Francis.

Much of the later part of his life was dominated by the increasingly crippling effect of arthritis, and he spent his last



years at Alnmouth where his voice could be heard, echoing alarm or hilarity, up and down the corridors as he refused to be defeated by the restrictions of a wheelchair. Meals were enlivened by endless stories from the past, and every occasion embroidered by an anecdote. He rejoiced to keep the jubilee of his profession not long before his final illness.

At his funeral there was a young naval officer who had come from the other end of England to pay his respects. He had never known or met Denis. But his mother had, and her deep appreciation and love for him as her spiritual director and friend had compelled him to attend on his own initiative. It was not only a typical gesture of the sort of friendship Denis generated in his life, but somehow appropriate and not entirely unexpected. It says much for the long shadow of his love and generosity of giving in the life he finally gave back to God, where he now lives, as Charles Williams would say, 'Under his Mercy'.

## Before retreat

Spirit, quieten me  
With the rustle of leaves,  
With the falling leaf,  
With the still brown leaves on the grass.

Quieten me with the hush of cars passing on the road  
Intent on business in which I have no part;  
With the rattle of milk bottles  
And the quiet closing of a door.

Quieten me with your inward peace  
And I shall listen and hear.  
I shall listen and hear your voice in the hushed world outside;  
And in the falling leaf.

Thelma Frost



Clifford Dunn



# Community Routes

## ▶▶ Father Algy

A short account of the life of Father Algy will be included in a new Supplementary Volume to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, due to be published this year. Father Algy was the Guardian of Hilfield from 1937 until his death in 1955. All three orders of SSF owe an immense debt to his vision and guidance and organizing ability. Legends about him abound, but, alas, cannot be included in the short space allowed in the *DNB*.

## ▶▶ Nursing first

Brother Oliver from the Reef Islands, who has been working as a nurse at the hospital in Honiara, is the first person from the Solomons to have his training recognized in Britain. He came here in March to extend his experience by working in British hospitals, and to share in the life of brothers and sisters here. He is hoping to learn about nursing and pastoral ministry to people with AIDS.

## ▶▶ Birmingham beginnings

*Brother Damian writes:*

'Year one in our newly formed grouping of brothers in Gillott Road gave us opportunity to settle into a family, to seek new local ministries and to strive for Franciscan aims and activities. It began with the struggle to own the building that we had just closed as a Boys Hostel. However, few changes were necessary as we came to value the chapel in the roof, the large open reception room downstairs, the ten bedrooms, the generous garden watched over by the compelling eyes of Lizzie the dog and Gabriel the aristo-cat.

'All the fragments have been gathered up, indeed hospitably transformed from our previous work of twenty years standing, the caring for particular lads with social needs, to that of a place open to the wider possibilities of care in the city. People have therefore arrived for prayer and for parties, for recreation and reflection, in crisis and in hope.

'Year one has given us a chance to sow many new seeds as our community of six covers three generations and reflects varied energies and experience. Now we wait to see what takes root and grows as we seek to live out the Gospel in this Midlands area with the emphasis on the City, alongside the Body of Christ in Brum'.



*Some of the brothers gathered for the New Zealand Chapter in Auckland earlier this year. L-R (back) Giles, Daniel, Jon Bankert, Anselm, Brian, Colin: (middle) Tristram, Victor, Dominic, Donald Sullivan, Walter: (front) Randolph, Michael, Damian, Masseo.*

## ▶▶ Retiring shortly

This summer brings to an end the appointment of Barnabas as Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester, which he has held for twelve years.



It is the end of an academic career which began unexpectedly when he was a member of the Cambridge house and was appointed a lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity. He will be living at Hilfield, where he hopes to continue writing a large book on Judges. Two short books are now in the press awaiting publication, a Study Guide on the Gospel of S. John and an outline of the Theology of Hebrews.

## ▶▶ Belize brothers

Brother Zeph Idiniah from Ysabel passed through London on his way to work in Belize, Central America. He has gone to live and work with Brother Desmond who is from Belize, and is the bishop of the diocese of Belize. Brother Gabriel from Papua New Guinea is joining them, and the two Pacific Islands brothers will stay there for at least two years assisting Desmond with both administrative and pastoral work.

## ▶▶ Outside works

It isn't all that often that all the brothers in the same friary are able to take part in the same engagement outside their home. For three years now the brothers in Scunthorpe have had this opportunity thanks to the invitation extended from the diocese to lead a training day in Lincoln for those involved in non-stipendiary ministry. On each occasion the requested theme has been intercession.

This year it took place in Edward King House which takes its name from the saintly bishop (though often erroneously called King Edward House!). Martin began this year with some suggestions on how to avoid turning the intercessions at the Eucharist into veiled (or not so veiled) notices



or political exhortations, and then people broke into groups with Anselm, Gordon and Harry participating, to produce their own prayers for use together. After lunch Anselm led a session on family services and the groups again had the chance to compile some such services of their own. The day concluded with a shared meditation and evening prayer in the chapel.

## ▶▶ Home hospitality

*Brother Samuel writes:*

'Like many SSF houses around the country we here in Liverpool, while welcoming people to pray and worship with us throughout the week, have chosen one particular weekly Eucharist, in our case Thursday evenings, as a focus for hospitality. Those who come reflect our involvement with the local area: handicapped people from the L'Arche Community, teenagers from a church youth group, university students, complete families, Companions, and others besides.

'We're never quite sure how many are likely to come, the numbers have fluctuated between nil and forty, making catering for the meal which follows the Eucharist as much an act of faith as the liturgy itself! We value their company and rejoice in what they bring to us'.

## ▶▶ Korean pioneers

An increased cultural diversity is the experience of the Auckland, New Zealand friary following the arrival of two Koreans. Brothers Andrew Park and Barnabas Lee are at the friary for a period of community formation following which they intend returning to Korea to form an indigenous community there.

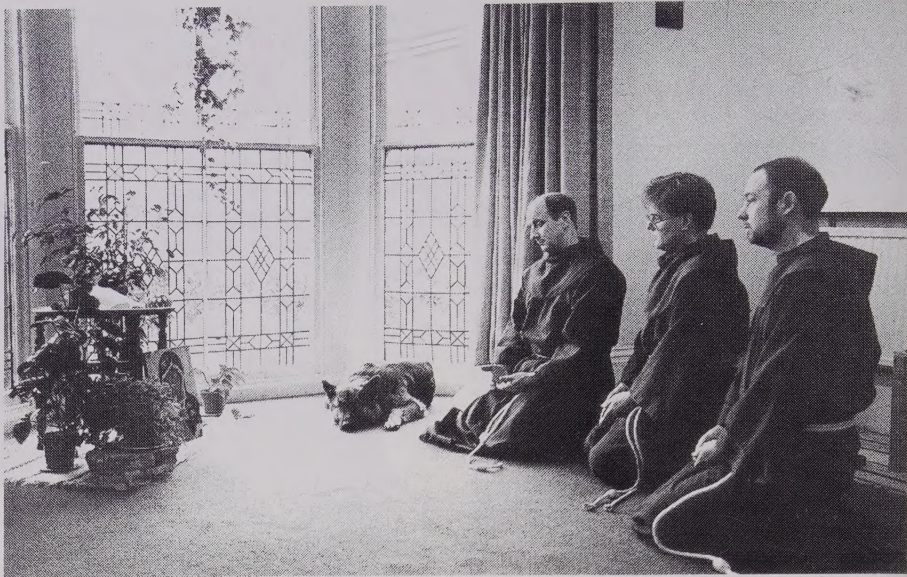


*Barnabas Lee and Andrew Park with our Minister General.*

They each bring their own gifts and experience. Andrew, as well as having been a paratrooper is an expert floral artist. His church ministry has been that of catechist. Barnabas' background is that of seminary study and being ordained as a deacon.

## ▶▶ Brother Arthur

Brother Arthur Odbert, who had been on leave of absence for some time, died on 6 March, 1990 in Birmingham, aged



*Brothers Samuel, Gerard Paul and David Francis with sister Simba in the chapel of the Liverpool house.*

60. He joined the First Order in 1968. After completing his early training at Hilfield, Arthur served practically all his time in the Midlands. Many will remember his assembling of the tower-clock at Glasshampton which he masterminded and maintained with great pride. In 1974 he was transferred to the Birmingham houses first at 23 and then at 113 Gillott Road, where he was for a number of years the right-hand man to Brother Arnold. He kept up a much valued link with several of the members of the Hostel after they had moved on. Arthur came to SSF from a caring ministry among the homeless at the Crypt of S. Martin-in-the-Fields, London, a theme which he bore witness to throughout his life.

## ▶▶ Spirit of adoption

*From S. Elizabeth House, Birmingham, Sister Virginia writes:*

'It seems something of a paradox that for the first time in my life I am working with what can only be described as a privileged group, but perhaps even the apparently well-off can be vulnerable and being vulnerable, poor. I work for a Roman Catholic adoption agency selecting and assessing couples who want to adopt that increasingly scarce commodity, a baby.

'If children are gift, these children are particularly so. Out of the tragedies of the birth mother and father, the infertile couple and the infant, comes forth joy for the adopters and for the child. Birth mothers and fathers remain losers and need our love and prayers.

'We also look for families for "hard-to-place" children, the handicapped, non-white, teenagers and family groups. Could you offer your home to three damaged children? It's a lot to ask and a lot to give'.

## ▶▶ Round-up

**Freddie** is now at Restawhile which is part of the West Ham Central Mission, not far from the Plaistow house . . . **Paul Anthony** has now moved to Birmingham from Alnmouth . . . at the end of April **Mark Nicholas** moves to Glasshampton . . . **Evelyn Joyce** has moved to Plaistow . . . sadly, **Eileen Mary's** mother died on 6 January, and her father, at 94, is very frail. We keep them in our prayers.

**Susan** is home after three years in New Zealand. Those of us who were present at the First Order Chapters in Auckland found a small but flourishing group of sisters there, including a postulant, **Jean Malcolm**. **Julian Barbara** is waiting for a visa, but expects to be able to join them in early May.

## Letters

### Creation spirituality

Northampton

I have been a friend and 'supporter' of SSF since 1947. In a spirit of affection I write to say how sad I was to find you giving such publicity as you did in your last number to theories which are out of harmony with 'our father Francis' unswerving devotion to the orthodox Catholic Christian Faith of the Church. Euphemisms like 'the Fall/Redemption tradition' simply disguise a forceful attempt to discredit the orthodox Faith of the Church and substitute for it theories of contemporary writers and propagandists.

Most regrettable was the prominence given to a so-called 'Credo' which misuses the Christian New Testament word 'believe' and, in its last stanza,



speaks of God as 'which' and plainly ignores that revelation of God in Our Lord Jesus Christ which is the very basis of our Faith and Life. Reading again recently S. Paul's letter to the Colossians made me feel more unhappy than ever about 'New Age' teaching.

Please don't betray S. Francis in his marvellous devotion to Christ and his fervent grasp of the orthodox Faith of the Church or you will forfeit your vocation to guide and inspire us in following Christ today, in the spirit of S. Francis of Assisi. REG PRIESTNALL.

## Reviews

*Esther de Waal, The Celtic Vision, selections from Carmina Gadelica, DLT, 1988, £6.95.*

When opening this book for the first time, one cannot fail to be both impressed and overwhelmed by an amazing collection of prayers, all originating from the Hebridean Isles. The prayers themselves are obviously dated, having been passed down through many generations. In our rapidly changing world, therefore, some who may prefer not to pray in the poetic and florid language of former days, but seek to employ a more colloquial and personal approach to God — though one cannot deny that these Celtic prayers are certainly intimate — might well feel that this collection is not for them. Such a conclusion, without studying Esther de Waal's very informative introduction to each section of the book, would be to miss out on what the purpose of the book is all about.

From the outset one needs to understand that the editor, in the wide-ranging selection of prayers she has given us, is telling us the very vivid story of Celtic spirituality.

The real message behind this new single volume is that the Hebridean people were very conscious of God's presence in their everyday living. Their spirituality was evident in everything they did in their daily lives, and this is repeatedly reflected in the hymns, prayers and poems. They clearly saw God as the creator of all life, they breathed Christ in all their doings, and they were conscious of God's Spirit directing their activities. In all their actions they demonstrated the sovereignty of the Trinity.

Here lies the real value of these prayers. We might not want to use them word for word in our own times of prayer, but we will certainly feel an urge to reflect on them in meditation, and, thereby, they have all the ingredients for leading us into a deeper spiritual union with the triune God.

The Right Reverend E. F. DARLING.  
Bishop of Limerick and Killaloe.

*Brother Ramon SSF, Soul Friends, A Journey with Thomas Merton, Marshall Pickering, 1989, £5.99.*

This is a difficult book to review. It is about Thomas Merton, a Trappist Monk who exercised a world-wide influence through his writings in the 'fifties and 'sixties, and who has been much written about since. It is also about Brother Ramon, his own pilgrimage and the extent to which he has been deeply encouraged and helped by Merton. It is therefore Merton seen through the eyes of an enthusiastic disciple, with all the possibilities of distortion which that might involve.

My initial reaction was therefore one of some wariness. I wondered if I was being presented with Thomas Merton in a way that others would recognise. But the more I read on, the more I became sure that Ramon has entered very closely into the essential heart of Merton's teaching life. With great care and thoroughness, Ramon spells out for us the way in which Merton's understanding and practice of contemplative prayer evolved, and the theology which undergirded it; a theology of incarnation and participation in Christ which centres on the love of God for the whole created world and everyone in it. That led Merton to become an outspoken critic of many things in his own country and modern western society, especially our material greed, violence and war. It is not difficult to see how closely this connects with elements in the life of S. Francis, and why it appeals strongly to a radical Franciscan today!

One element in Merton's pilgrimage, which is clearly of great importance to Ramon, was his growing desire for solitude. It is summed up in a sentence at the very end of the book: 'Merton's understanding of solitude was a life of love, and a life of special love, for it is centred upon God, and overflows directly from the source — God's love for humankind in Christ'. (p. 309.) To those of us who are ceaselessly busy with jobs and families (and who live in a large city), it can be very hard to understand what such a vocation might mean. Yet I find more and more that I need some 'spaces' within my own life where I can gently, steadily contemplate 'the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent and infinitely abundant Source' (to quote Merton). Ramon's journey with Merton, now about to take him back to a hermitage in West Wales, is costly witness to a truth of deep importance for us all. I feel sure that there are many readers of the *Franciscan* who will find this book a valuable stimulus to their own prayer and pilgrimage.

The Right Reverend R. BOWLBY.  
Bishop of Southwark.

## Minister's Letter

*Sister Elizabeth, Provincial Minister of the First Order sisters, writes:*



Human beings need stimulation. In the wisdom of the ever-creating God we engender and process a great many ideas from our own and other's minds, often in response to felt and observed need. It is in this way that continued renewal in so many spheres becomes possible. New projects, new methods, fresh insight into known theories, together with flashes of inspiration and enlightened vision, keep us moving on our journey towards fleetingly glimpsed horizons ahead.

At least, that is our hope. Inevitably, there are non-starters, false leads and dead-ends, as in physical evolution. Many creative possibilities come to grief because over-played, over-emphasised or lacking balance.

It is accepted, in political circles, that a moveable vote bringing different parties to the fore in the course of time is healthy: or, in social and civic life, that bodies maintaining law and order will be most effective where the regime is non-oppressive and humane.

Christian history contains the early heresies, Crusades, the Inquisition, Quietism, the Reformation, many movements with seeds of truth, open to over-cultivation with more and less disastrous results. Earlier this century we had the 'Honest to God' and the 'death of God' debates; more recently Eastern meditation, giving place to Ignatian methods of imaginative reflection and the mapping out of spiritual paths from personality testing. Now we have creation-centred spirituality needing the balance of redemptive theology and the avoidance of pantheism. Further, as in the past, there is controversy between the compassion required of Christians in respect of suffering, and the integrity desired in connected moral and ethical issues.

These things are there to be grappled with, but need not leave us unduly fearful. What suits one person's needs is inappropriate for another. Along with experiential learning God gives critical faculties and inspires us towards the truth.

Two things matter. First, that where individual enthusiasm is fired, it shall lead to deepening of faith and commitment. Second, that leaders will facilitate such discernment as will be for the building up of the whole body of the faithful.

We have good precedents for trusting God for these gifts.



# A taste of New Zealand

We asked some of the brothers and sisters in New Zealand for a flavour of the life and ministries of their houses in Auckland. The mixture is rich. As Teresa says, 'New Zealand is a country of geographical isolation, but it is not isolated from the pains and needs and struggles of other members of the Commonwealth, nor of the rest of the world'.

I arrived in Auckland in February, 1983', writes Daniel, 'at long last fulfilling something I had wanted to do since childhood days. Visit New Zealand. Like many people in the United Kingdom I had 'done' New Zealand at school, both in geography and history. Later, before joining SSF, I had been to sea and visited many countries around the world, but never New Zealand. Then in 1982 SSF transferred me here.

I arrived in a country which I thought had its act together as a multicultural nation, where the different races lived together in harmony. Arriving only a year and a half after Springbok the tension and division was a shock. In the last few years I have lived in a country which has recognised that things were not right and tried to work at it. The whole country has seen issues such as racism, the threat of nuclear war, poverty, injustice and violence. Struggled with them as a nation, a family. Not always agreeing but trying to move together. Issues are not the concern of just a few but of the vast majority and all seem to take part in the debate'.

For Teresa 'the beauty is there in its natural form but pollution is there too, in its rivers, in the ravages of mining, in intensive farming, in high-rise glass buildings where money is the main



*A traditional Maori food store at Rotorua village.*

factor. A Labour government has not been able to put its ideals into practice, so here as elsewhere the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Social problems abound and suffering and hardship and homelessness and hopelessness are rife. The opportunities for caring work are many and it's not difficult for us to identify areas of need'.

'The CSF house is an ordinary house', writes Maureen, 'as one goes by on the main road. We've been able to develop the garden space and lawn into an attractive area providing a quiet place for prayer, study and rest, both for ourselves and for others who wish to use it'.

Hospitality has a very Franciscan flavour and for Bruce-Paul it is not simply a matter of welcoming people in. 'One of the ways in which I try to live out our friary's commitment to hospitality', he writes, 'is to spend each Saturday evening as a volunteer at the Crisis Care centre of the City Mission. It is one of those very simple ministries of presence . . . . answering the telephone, welcoming folk, making tea or coffee, playing pool or billiards, watching TV with the residents of the Youth Shelter.

The friars have had a twenty year association with the City Mission. In fact the old Mission building was our first home and friary in New Zealand. Since then the Mission has been re-located in an old pub, converted for use as the centre of Crisis Care for the

destitute and homeless. Nearby is the 'de-tox' centre which the Mission runs and a Family Shelter. Elsewhere in the city there is a women's shelter staffed by the Mission.

'Being a member of SSF in Aotearoa/New Zealand is many things for me', writes Christopher John. 'It means being a Franciscan in a country and in a church facing the challenges of just partnership among our races. It means living in the tension which having only one friary for the whole country creates — a friary which is both a diocesan and a provincial presence, a novice house and a base for active ministries. It means in the midst of all this and of all the activity of each day the challenge of deepening my own awareness of Christ's presence'.

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*Brothers and sisters take a break.*